

# **HARBOR SEAL HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS**

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The need to compile available information on the characteristics of harbor seal habitat in Alaska, and to combine that information with their abundance and distribution in a Geographic Information Systems (G.I.S.) format has been identified. Such information will be valuable for future management and conservation needs as well as provide researchers with baseline data. The proposed database will reference individual pupping and haulout sites with various habitat characteristics. The habitat characteristics considered to be most important include: haulout substrate, bathymetry, presence of major fisheries, proximity to vessel traffic lanes, the presence of glacial ice, estimated subsistence mortality level, estimated incidental take by commercial fisheries, distance to major freshwater streams, distance to human coastal communities, and an index of coastline complexity.

During February 2000, I assembled a list of these habitat characteristics along with a description of what pertinent information is available, who has access to the specific information (e.g., agency and contact person), what form the information is available in, and how the information can be obtained. Most of the habitat information needed is available. However, I did not find an index of coastline complexity that was currently being used by the agencies, nor is there a complete list of tidewater glaciers within the state (glacial ice). Much of the other habitat information listed above (i.e., estimated incidental take by commercial fisheries, various commercial fisheries data, bathymetry) is available in various electronic databases with specific agencies, but will need to be summarized or queried to be useful. Some of the basic data is available in G.I.S. format such as location of communities, freshwater streams, and location of statistical areas for fisheries. The Subsistence Division of ADF&G. also has summarized the estimated subsistence mortality level of harbor seals in Southeast Alaska, in G.I.S. format, but information for the rest of the state still needs to be summarized. The compiled list of resources will aid in the construction of a much-needed G.I.S. database that will summarize many of the characteristics of harbor seal habitat into a single format.